A ryght frute-
full Epystle/deuysed by the
moste excellent clerke Erasmus/
in laude and prayse of matrymo-
ny/translated in to Englyshe/
by Rychard Tauernour/
which translation
he hathe de-
dicate
to the ryght honorable Mayster
Thomas Cromwel most wor
thy Counseloure to our
soueraygne lorde
kyng Henry
the eyght.

CVM PRIVILEGIO
REGALI.

To the ryght

honorable Mayster Crom-
well one of the kynges moste
honorable counsell, his
humble seruaũt Ry-
charde Tauer-
nour sendeth
greating.

Our dayly oratours
(moste honorable syr)
ponderyng with hym
selfe youre gratuyte
boũty towardes hym,
began bestly to reuolue in mynd,
howe he, agayne on hys parte
myght somwhat declare his fer-
uent zele of herte towardes you.
Whiche he thus reuoluynge / loo
sodenly (as god wolde) a certeyne

Epystle

Epystle of Doctour Erasmus, deuysed in commendacion of wedlocke, offered it selfe vnto his syght. Which so sone as he began to reade, he thought it a thynge full necessarye and expedyent, to trãslate it in to our vulgure tõg/ & so vnder your noble protection to cõmunicate it to the people, namely when he cõsidered the blynd superstition of men and women/ which cease nat day by day to profesle & vowe perpetuall chastyte before or they suffyciently knowe themselues & thinfirmite of theyr nature. Which thyng (in my opinion) hathe bene and is yet vnto this day the rote and very cause original of innumerable mysches ues. I pray our lorde Jesu of his infinite goodnes to prouyde som spedy reformatiõ, whan it shalbe

hys pleasure. In the meane seas
sō, please it your goodnes (ryght
honorable syr) to accepte this rude
and symple translacion of your
seruaunt / and ye so doynge shall
nat a litle encourage hym to grea
ter thynges in tyme cōmyng.

And thus Christ haue
you alwayse in his
keappynge.
Amen.

¶ An Epistle in prayse of matrymony.

Although swete colyn ye be wyse ynoughe of your selfe, nor nede not other mens counsel, yet for ỹ old frendeshyp contynued from our chylhode betwyxte vs & also for your kyndnes towardes me / & fynally because of the streyght alyaunce betwyxt vs: I thought it my duty (if I wolde be the man whom ye always haue take me for / that is to say your frend and louer) of such thynges as I iudged to belonge moste to the preseruation and dygnyte of you and yours / gladly and frely to auertyse you. Other mens profyght sometyme we espye better then our owen. I haue ofte folowed your counsell,

fell, whych I haue found no lesse profytable than frendly. Nowe if ye agayne wyll folowe myne I truste it shall repent neyther me of my counsellynge / nor you of your folowyng. Our frende Antony Bald supped with me ỹ last nyght, one that is (as ye knowe well ynough) your great frende and nere kynsman. An heuy feste and full of tearys. He shewed me (which was a great sorow to vs bothe) that the good gentyll woman your mother is departed, ỹ your syster for sorowe and delyre is entred in to a house of barren nunnys / that the hope of your stocke is turned onely vnto you / that your frendes with hole assent haue offered you a wyfe of great substaunce, of noble blode, of excellent beautye, of gentyl maners

* The narration.

ners, and fynally whiche berethe great loue towardes you. That ye yet, this notwithstandyng, for some immoderate sorowe, or els some superstitious holynes haue so determyned to lyue a chast lyf, and neuer to marye, that nouther for the care of your stocke, nor loue of yssue, nor for any requestes, prayers, or tearys of your frendes ye canbe plucked awaye from your purpose. But ye by myne aduyse shall chaunge thys mynde, and leuyng bachelershyp, a forme of lyuynge bothe barren and vnnaturall, shall gyue your selfe to moste holy wedlocke. In whiche mater I couet that neyther ỹ loue of your frēdes which els ought to ouercō your mynde, nor myne authorite any thynge shulde ayde my cause / if I shewe

nat by clere reasons that this shal be for you bothe moste honeste, most profytable and moste pleasaunt, yea what wyll ye say if (as this tyme requyre) also moste necessary:

For fyrst of al, if the regard of honestye moueth you, which with good men is hyghly consydered, what thyng is more honeste then matrimony, whereunto Christ hymselfe dyd greate honoure and worshype, whiche vouche saued nat onely to be present with his mother at the mariages, but also consecrated ỹ mariage feste with the fyrst fruetz of his myracles: What is more holy then that which ỹ creatour of all thynges hath ordeyned, copeled, sanctifyed: whiche dame nature her selfe hathe enacted: What is more

more laudable than hit, whyche who reprehendeth/is condemnable of hereſy: So honorable is matrimony, as is the name of heretyke ſlaunderous. What is a thyng of more equite, then to render that to the poſterite/ whiche we our ſelfes receyued of oure auncestrye: What acte on the contrarye ſyde is done with les conſideration, than vnder the zele of holynes to flee ẏ, as vnholy & vngodly, which god the well and father of all holynes wolde haue counted moſt holy: What thynge is farder from all humanite/ than man to abhorre from the lawes of mānes eſtate: What is a more vnkynde acte than to denye that to your yongers, whiche if ye toke nat of your elders, ye could nat be he that myght denye: Now if we

The Author of matrimonie.

requyre ỹ Authour of matrymony, it was founded and ordeyned nat of Lycurgus, nat of Moses, nat of Solon, but of the hyghe & myghty worker of all thinges, of hym it was also prayfed/enhonested and consecrate. For at the begynnyng when he had made man of ỹ slyme of ỹ erthe he thought ỹ his lyfe shulde be vtterly myserable and vnpleasaunt, if he ioyned nat Eue a cõpagnion vnto hym. Wherfore he brought forthe the wyfe nat of the erthe, as he dyd mã, but out of the rybbes of Adã, wherby it is to be vnderstãd that nothynge ought, to be more dere to vs then ỹ wyfe, nothyng more conioyned/nothynge more faste glued vnto vs. The selfe same god after the flode/when he was at one agayne with mankynde enacted

Man fyrste created/ forthe with was copuled with a wyfe.

After ye flode of Noye.

enacted (as we rede in scripture) this lawe fyrst, nat that we shuld loue bachelarshyp/but to crease/ to multiply/to replenyshe ẏ erth. But howe coulde that be, onles men wolde gyue theyr labour to wedlocke? And leste we shulde here fynd cauellations/allegyng the liberte of the old law of Moses, or the necessite of that season/ I pray you what meaneth ẏ sentense repeted also in the new law of Christ/ratifyed and confirmed by Chrystes owne mouthe? For this cause (sayth he) shall man leue father and mother and styck to his wyfe. What thynge is more holy than the natural loue of the chyld to his father? And yet the feythe of wedlocke is preferred aboue it By whose authorite? by goddes. At what tyme? when nat only the

the law of matrimony remued.

Math. xix.

olde

olde lawe florysshed/ but also when the newe lawe of Christ began to spryngе. The father is forsaken/ the mother is forsaken / and the wyfe is stycked to. The son (in ỹ Ciuile lawe) emancipate / that is to saye enfranchysed & out of his fathers bondes / begynneth to be his owne man & at lybertye. The son, in the same lawe, abdicate / that is to saye forsaken and dysherited of his father/ ceaseth to be his son. But only deth vndo wedlocke, if yet ỹ deth vndo it. Now syr if ỹ other sacramẽtes of Christes chyrch be had in greate veneratiõ, who seeth nat ỹ moch worshype ought to be gyuen to this, which was both ordeyned of god, & fyrst of all other. And the other in erth, this in paradise/ the other for remedy/ this for solas/ ỹ other

were

were put to in helpe of nature
which was fallen, only this was
gyuen to nature at the fyrst crea-
tion. If we count the lawes holy
which be institute of men, shall
nat the lawe of wedlocke be most
holy whiche we haue receyued of
hym, of whom we haue receyued
lyfe: and which began in maner
euen at one tyme with mankind:
To be shorte/because he wold con
ferme this lawe by sum example/
when he was a yonge man/ and
bydden (as sayd is) to the brydale,
he cam thyther gladly with his
mother, and nat contended with
so doyng, dyd also greate honour
to the feste with hys wonderfull
worke/makyng none other wher
the prosperous cõmencemẽt and
beginning of his myracles: Why
than (ye wyll say) dyd Christ him
selfe
A confu
tatiõ.

selfe absteyne from wedlocke? As thoughe ther be nat very many thynges in Christe / whyche we ought rather to maruayle at, thā folowe. He was borne without carnal father / he proceded without payne of his mother, he arose frō dethe to lyue when the sepulcre was closed, what is nat in hym aboue nature? Let such thynges be appropriate to hym. Let vs (lyuynge within the lawe of nature) wonder & prayse ỹ thynges that be aboue nature / but folowe those workes ỹ be for our capacite. But he wolde be borne of a virgyn. Truth it is, of a virgyn / but yet wedded. A virgyn to his mother becam hym ỹ was god, but ỹ she was wedded, she signyfied vnto vs what we ought to do. Virginite be cam her whiche (by

the dyuyne inſpiratiō of the holy ghoſt) beyng pure & immaculate brought forthe hym whiche was moſt pure & vnſpotted/but yet Ioſeph was her huſbande, whiche thyng ſetteth forth vnto vs the cō mendation of the lawes of wedlocke. How coulde he more commend wedlocke, then whā he wylyng to declare ỹ preuy & wonderfull coniunction of the diuyne nature with the humane body and ſoule, and wyllyng to declare his ineffable & eternall loue towarde his chyrch (that is to ſay, the company of Chriſtian people) calleth hymſelfe the brydegrome and the chyrch his ſpouſe? Greate (ſayth Paule) is the myſtery of matrymony: in Chriſte and in the chyche. If ther had ben any cople in erth more holy, if there had be any bond

To the Epheſians the v. Cha.

bonde of loue and concorde more religiously to be kept, than wedlocke / vndoutedly he had fetched his similytude from thens. What lyke thyng do ye euer reade, in all scripture of bachelershyp? Honorable wedlocke and the immaculat bryde bed is spoken of. Bachelershype is nat ones named. Nowe lyr, Moses law abhorreth baren wedlocke, and therfore we reade that some were put out of the cōmynalte for the same cause. And why so? suerly because they lyuyng vnprofytably to the cōmon wele, & for there owne syngular auayle, dyd nat multyply the people with any issue. If thā the law dāneth baren matrymony muche more it dāneth bachelers. If the infirmyte of nature escapeth nat punyshment, certes the frowarde wyll

The law of the Jwes

wyll shall nat eschape. If they were punished whole nature fayled to ther wyll / what haue they deserued / whych wyl nat so moch as put to they? good wyll, that they be nat barren? The lawes of the Hebrues gaue this honoure to matrymonye / that he that maryed a new wyfe, shuld nat be compelled that yere to goo forthe to the batel. The cite is in greate leopardy if ther be not men of armes to defende it, but nedes it must decay if there be nat wedded men, by whom the youth cõtynually faylynge may be supplyed. Also the lawes of ỹ Romans punyshed them that were bachelars in renouyng them from all promotions of the cyte. But such as had encreased with chyldren the commune weale / to them they or-

deyned a reward openly to be gy-
uen, as it were for theyr wel delet
uynge. The lawe of the. iii. chyl-
derne is a sufficyēt proue for this
mater. For I wyll nat here re-
herse all ỹ reste. Lycurgus made
a lawe that they whyche maryed
nat wyues, shuld in somer season
be dryuen from the enterludes &
other syghtes, and in wynter go
about the market place all naked
and curse them selues, sayng they
suffred iuste punyshmēt, because
they wolde nat obey the lawes.
Nowe wyll ye know how much
matrymonye was set by in olde
tyme: Consyder the punyshment
for ỹ defoyling of it. The Grekes
ones thought it expedyent to re-
uenge the breche of matrymonye
by contynuall warres enduryng
the space of. x. yeres. Further-
more

The lawe of the Lacedemonians.

The batel of Troy.

more by the lawes nat onely of the Romaynes / but also of the Hebrues and other nacyons / aduowterers sholde lose ther lyues. The thefe was delyuered by paynge. iiii. tymes so muche as he had stolen / the syn of aduowtrye was punyshed with the axe. Also amonge the Hebrues he was stoned to deth with the peoples handes whych defyled that, without whyche the people shulde nat be. And the rigor of theyr lawes nat contented therwith/suffered also that he whyche was found in aduowtre shuld be put to deth without iudgement / with out lawes/ gyuyng that libertye to the grefe of ẏ wedded men, whiche vnneth is graũted to hym ẏ in ieoperdye of lyfe defendeth hymselfe. Doutles wedlocke muste nedes seme a

The law of the romans

The law of the Iwes.

tyght holy thyng whych defyled can nat be repurged without mā nes blode/ ⁊ the reuengyng wher of/ is neyther cōpelled to abyde ẏ lawes nor the iudge/ ẏ whiche se- uerite ⁊ rigour of law is neyther in murdre nor ī treson. But what stand we alday in wryttē lawes? This is the lawe of nature / nat grauen in tables of bras, but in- wardly fyxed ī our hartes, which who wyll nat obey, he is nat so much as to be estemed a mā much les a good cytizen. For if (as the Stoikes, men of sharpe iudge- mentes do dyspute) to lyue wel is nothynge els, but to folowe the guyde of nature/ what thing is so agreable to nature as matrymo- ny? For nothynge is so naturally gyuē nouther to man, nor yet to any other kynd of brute bestes as

The Stoikes

that

that euery one shuld preserue his kynd frō destructiō & by propaga tion of posterytye to make it as it were immortall, whych without carnall copulatiō (as euery man knoweth) can nat be brought to pas. And it semeth a foule shame dum bestes to obey ȳ lawes of na ture, & men (after the maner of gy auntes) to byd batell agaynst na ture, whose worke if we wyll be hold with yees nat dasselling, we shall perceyue ȳ her wyll is that ther be in euery kynde of thynges a certeyn spyce of wedlocke. For I omytte to speake of trees, in whom yet by ȳ authorȳte of Plinie wedlocke is founde with so manyfeste diuersyte of the male & female, that if the male tree shulde nat with hys boughes lye vpō ȳ female trees that stande aboute

A certen kynde of wedlocke i trees

hym couetyng as it were a medlyng to gether, they shulde abyde baren and fruteles. I holde my peace of pretious stones, i whych the same author wryteth (but nat he alone) that ther is founde both male & female. I pray you hath nat god so knyte all thynges to gether with certeyn bondes, that one thynge doth neade an others help: What thynk ye to the heuen whych turneth about with cõtynual mouyng: I pray you whyle it maketh the erthe leynge vnder neth, whych is mother of al/ with sundry kynd of thynges fruteful, pouring seed (as it were) vpon it/ wth it nat thoffice of an husbãd: But to renne through eche thing were ouer longe. Nowe, to what purpose haue we spoken thys: Suerly, that ye may vnderstand, by such

In precyous stones.

by ſuche naturall commyxtions, euery thynge to haue his beynge and continuance, without which althynges to be dyſſolued / to perysshe / & to fall away. It is feyned by the olde & wyſe poetes (whoſe ſtudy was to couer the preceptes of philoſophye vnder myſtycall fabuls) that gyauntes the ſonnes of the erthe, hauynge feete lyke ſerpentes, dyd caſte mountaynes vpon montaynes that reached vp to heuen, and ſo ſtandynge vpon them warred agaynſt thegoddes. What ſygnifieth this fable? Surely that certeyne vngodly perſones / wylde / and of an vngentle nature dyd greatly abhorre from matrimonyall concord / and therfore they were caſte downe hedelonge with Iuppiters thunderbolt / that is to ſaye / they vtterly

A fabule & the expoſition therof.

decayed and cam to nought, sythe they eschued the thynge, wherby mankynd is only preserued. But the selfe same poetes haue feyned that Orpheus beyng a poete and a mynstrell dyd moue with the swete note of his musycall instrumēt ỹ hard rockes of stone. What meaned they hereby? Nothynge els, but that a wyse & an eloquent man dyd fyrst prohybet the stony men/and whyche lyued after the maner of wylde beastes / frome leyng at large/& brought them to the holy lawes of matrymonye. Wherfore it appereth euydently that who so euer is nat touched with desyer of wedlocke semeth to be no man, but a stone / an ennemy to nature/a rebelle to god/ by his owne foly sekynge hys decay and vndoynge. But goo to,

sythe

sythe we be fallen into fabuls no thynge fabulous nor veyne / the same Orpheus whē he descended downe to hellys and ther moued Pluto lord of hell and the soules ther abydyng on suche wyse that he myght easely leade away with hym Euridice his wyfe / what other thynge suppose we that the poetes thought, than that they wold commend vnto vs the loue of wedlocke, whyche also in helle is counted holy and relygyous: Hereunto also belongethe, that the antyquite made Jupiter lord of wedlocke, and named hym for the same purpose Gamelium / & made Juno the lady of women in chyldbed, callyng her pronubam and Lucinam, Superstityously errynge (I graunt well) in the names of the goddes: but nat er-

ynge in this that they iudged matrimony a thyng holy & wor-thy to be regarded of the goddes. Surely there haue bene dyuerse lawes / cerymonyes / and vsages among dyuerse peoples and nacions. But ther was neuer nacion so barbarous / so farre from al humanite / with whom the name of wedlocke hathe nat be recounted holy / hathe nat be recounted worshypfull. This the Thrasian this the Sarmate / this the man of Inde, this the Greke / this the Italion / this the Brytan furdest of all the worlde, or if ther be any further then they, haue had in hyghe reuerence. And why so? For of necessyte that thynge must nedes be cõmen, whyche the commen parent of all / hathe empryn-ted, and so inwardly empryn-ted, that

that the sense and feelynge of it,
hath nat onely perced ỳ turtyls
and the doues/but also the moste
cruell wyld bestes. For the lyons
be gentil and meke to theyr lyon-
nesses. The tygrees fyght for
theyr whelpes. The asses stycke
nat to renne thrugh fyers leynge
in theyr waye for the sauegarde &
defence of theyr fooles. And thys
they call the law of nature which
as it is most stronge, so it is most
large. Wherfore lyke as he is no
dilygent husband, which conten-
ted with the thynges present, ten-
dethe ful curiously the trees redy
growen / but hathe lytle regarde
outher of settyng or of graffyng/
because ỳ of necessite within few
yeres those orcheyardes (be they
neuer so well kepte) must decaye
and become desolate. So in lyke
wyse

A similitude.

wyle he is to be iudged an vndy-
ligent cytizē in ỹ publyke weale,
which cōtented with the cōpany
present, hath no respecte nor con-
sideracio to supply newe in place
of the olde. Noman therfore haue
ben counted a noble and worthy
citizen, which hath nat bestowed
his dilygence in begettyng chyl-
dern and bryngynge them ver-
tuously vp. Among the Hebrues
& Perlyans he was most hyghe-
ly commended, ỹ had moste plen-
ty of wyues, as thoughe the con-
tre were most bound to hym, that
with most chyldern had enryched
it. Do ye studye to be more holy
then was Abraham? Ye shuld ne-
uer haue ben called Pater multa-
rum gentium that is to say/the Fa
ther of many peoples / and that
of godes owne mouthe, if he had

fledde

fledde the company of hys wyfe.
Do ye labour to be reputed more
religious thā Jacob: He stycked
nat to bye his wyfe Rachel with
so longe apprentyshode and bon-
dage. Be ye wyser than Solo-
mon: But what a flocke of wy-
ues keapte he at home: Be ye
chaster then Socrates: Whyche
suffered at home in hys house
Xantippe that wayward woman
nat only (as he was wont to geste
hym selfe) because he myght lerne
pacyence at home, but because he
wolde seme nat to halt in thoffyce
of nature. For he a man (whome
the dyuine answere of Apollo on-
ly iudged wyse) vnderstode full
wel, that vnder thys lawe & con-
dition he was begotten, to thys
he was borne/this he dyd owe to
nature. For if it haue bene well
sayd

layde of the olde phyloſophers / if it haue bene nat without cauſe cõfermed of oure dyuines, if it haue bene ryghtly euery where pro-
A pro-uerbe. nounced as a prouerbe, that god nor nature haue made no thynge fruſtrate nor in vayne / why (I pray you) hath god geuẽ vs theſe membres: why theſe pryckes and prouocatiõs: why hath he added the power of begettynge, if bachelarſhyp be taken for a prayſe: yf one wold gyue you a pretious gyfte, as a bowe / a garment / or a ſwerde, ye ſhuld ſeme vnworthy the thyng that ye haue receyued, if outher ye wolde nat, or ye could nat vſe it. Where as all other thynges be ordeyned by nature with moſte hygh reaſon, it is nat lykely that ſhe ſlumbered & ſlepte in makyng only this priue mem-

bre.

bre. Nor I here nat hym whiche wyll saye vnto me that/that foule ychynge and pryckes of carnall lust haue come nat of nature, but of syn. What is more onlyke the trowth? As though matrymony (whose offyce can nat be executed without these pryckes) was nat before syn. Moreouer in other bestes I praye you from whens commeth those pryckes and prouocations of nature, or of synne? wonder it is if nat of nature. And as touchyng the fowlnes/ surely we make that by our imaginacio to be fowle, which of the selfe nature is fayre and holy. Els, if we wolde weygh the thynge, nat by the oppynyon of the people, but by the very nature, howe is it les fowle (after ỹ maner of wylde bestes) to eate/to chaw/to dygest, to empte

I confutation.

empte the bely, thā to vse the law full & permytted pleasure of the body: But vertue (ye say) is to be obeyed rather than nature. As thoughe / that is to be called vertue whyche repugneth with nature; from whens if vertue haue nat his fyrste begynnynge, certes it can nat be it, whyche may with exercyse and lernynge be made perfecte. But the apostles lyse delyteth you; for they also folowed bachelarshyp, and exhorted other to the same. Lette thapostoly call men folowe thapostles, whyche (because there office is to teche & instructe the people) can nat both satisfye theyr flock & theyr wyfes, if they shuld haue any. Howbeit that thappostles also had wyues, it is euidently clere. Let vs geaūt bachelarshyp to ȳ bishops. What

do ye

do ye folowe the appostes forme of lyuynge, beynge so farre from the offyce of an apostle, syth ye be a man bothe temporall and also without offyce? It is lycenced them to be without wyues, to the entent they may the better attend to begette the more chylderne to Christ. Let this be ỳ priuilege of prestes & relygyous men, whych (as it appere) haue succeded the Essenes forme of lyuyng Whych damned holy matrymony. Yous estate requireth otherwyse. But Chryst hymselfe (ye wyl say) haue pronounced them blessed whyche Mat.19. haue gelded thẽ selfes for the kyngdom of god. I retecte nat the authoryte, but I wyl expound Christes meanynge. Fyrste of all, I thynk this sayng of Chryst to apperteine especially to those times

when it was expediēt to be moste redy & lose frō all worldly busy-nesses. Then was the tyme that they shulde fle & ren hyther & thy-ther through all landes, the perse cutoure was at hande on euery syde. But now such is the state of thynges & tymes, that no where ye may fynd the purenes and per fection of maners les spotted and contaminate, than amonge wed-ded persons. Let the swarmes of monkes, fryers, chanons, & nun-nys auaunce theyr professyon as moch as them lust. Let them bost as moch as they wyll, theyr cery-monyes & dysguysed cotes (wher by they be chefely knowen from the tēporall) suerly the most holy kynd of lyfe is wedlocke puerly & chastly kept. Forthermore nat he onely geldeth hymselfe which lyf-ueth

ueth without a wyfe, but he why che chaſtly & holyly doth thoſſyce of wedlocke. And wold god they were trewly chaſte, ſo many as cloke theyr vyces vnder the glo⸗ryous tytle of chaſtite and caſtra tyon, whyche vnder the ſhadowe of chaſtyte doo moꝛe fowly rage in fylthy and beſtely abhomyna⸗tion. Foꝛ I am aſhamed, ſo helpe me god, here to reken vp, in to what ſhamefull abhominatyons they ofte tymes falle, whyche doo thus repugne agayuſte nature. To be ſhoꝛte, Chriſt neuer com⸗maunded bachelarſhyp to none erthly perſone, but he openly foꝛ⸗bydde the deuoꝛcement. Suerly me thynke, he ſhulde be nat the woꝛſte counſellour foꝛ ỹ cõmune weale (cõſyderyng the faſhyons & manners of men) whyche wolde

He thyn⸗kethe yt expedyẽt foꝛ pre⸗ſtes to haue wy ues.

graunt also the prestes & relygyous persons lycence to mary, namely sythe ther is euery where so greate a multytude of prestes, of which (alas) how few lyue a chast lyfe: How moch better were it to tourne theyr cõcubyns into wyues, so that those whome they haue nowe with greate infampe, and with an vnquyet conscyence, they myght then haue openlye with an honeste fame, and beget chylderne whom they may loue as trewly legytymate, and bryng them godly vp, so that nother the father shall be ashamed of them, nor they of ther father. And this (I trow) the officyals of bysshops shulde haue procured long a go, but that greater gaynes aryse by the concubyns, then shuld by the wyues. But birgynyte (ye wyll

A confutacyon.

say)

say) is a dyuyne thynge, an angelycall thyng. Trewthe it is, but, on the contrarye syde, wedlocke is an humane thynge. I nowe speke to a man beynge my selfe a man. A cõmẽdable thyng, certes, is virgynite, but yet so that this prayse be nat transferred to ouer many, whyche commendation if euery man commenly wyl begyn to blurpe, what can be sayde or thought moze hurtfull and moze pnycious than virginyte? Moze ouer thoughe in other men virgynyte shuld moste of all deserue prayse, yet suerly i you it can nat lacke blame, in whome it nowe standeth to preserue youre noble stocke, worthy of an immortal contynuãce. Fynally he is but a very lytle of, from the prayse of virgynite, whyche kepeth purely

the law of wedlocke, and whyche hath a wyfe to the entent to beget chylderne, and nat to satysfy hys wanton luste. yf the brother, in the laws lawe. the law of Moses, be commaunded to rayse the seade of his brother, whych dyed without yssue, wyll ye suffre the hope of your whole lygnage to be vtterly extynte, namely syth it is returned to you only? Nor I am nat so ignorãt but ỹ I know welynoygh that the prayses of virginite haue ben rehersed, and celebrate with great volumes of sum of our olde fathers. Among whom Hierome Hierome so auaũceth it, ỹ in maner he dispiseth wedlocke ⁊ was prouoked of the byshoppes that were of the trew opinyõ to rechaũt ⁊ synge a newe song. But let this heate be graunted to those tymes. Nowe

I wolde

I wolde wysh those ẏ thus euery where without dyscretion do exhorte the youthe (nat yet knowen to them selfes) to bachelarshyp and vyrgynyte, to bestowe theyr labour in descryuynge the forme of chaste & pure matrimony. But yet they whyche ar so well pleased with virginite be nat dysplea sed with the warres agaynste the Turkes whyche passe vs so farre in numbre, whose iudgement if it be ryght, it shall folowe that it be chefely thought ryght & holy, busyly to beget chylderne & supplye youthe suffycyent for the vse of the warres. Except perchaũce they thynke to prepare gonnes, weapõnys, shyppes to ẏ warrrs, & thynke lytle neade of men. The same do alow to slee w̃ the swerd the parentes of infideles, to the in

tent that theyr chyldeme myght be baptysed, yea vnknowyng also. If this be trewe, howe gentyller a dede were it to bryngе the same to effecte with the office of internaryinge, eche with other. No nation is so cruel that abhorreth nat the murdre of infauntes. Lawes of princes in maner with lyke rigoure punyshe them that cause that, which is conceyued in the wouã to com forth deed, and them that make them baren with medycynes. Why so? For ther is smal diuersyte betwyxt hym that murdereth that whyche begynne to be borne, and hym whych procureth that nothyng can be borne Thys that in your body eyther dryeth vp, or with ỹ great daunger of your helth putrysyeth and corrupteth, whyche in your slepe

falleth

falleth away, had ben a man if ye wete a man your selfe. The olde lawe of the Jewes curseth hym whych when he is commaunded to lye with his brothers wyfe ꝑ is deade, casteth his seade on the erth that nothyng shuld be engendred, and is iudged vnworthy lyfe, whyche enuyeth lyfe to the frute ꝑ is to be borne. But howe lytle from hym differ they, which haue enioyned themselfes perpetuall barrennesse? Do they nat seme to kyl so many mẽ, as shuld haue ben borne, if they had gyuẽ theyr labour to the begettynge of childerne? I pray you if a manne haue a pece of groũd rancke of nature, whyche vntylled, he suffreth to be contynually bãrren, is nat this man punyshable by ꝑ Ciuile lawe, bycause it is for the profete

of the commune wele that euery man tendeth well his owne: yf he be punyshed whych neglecteth his grounde whych (be hit neuer so well tyld) bryng forth nothyng els than wheate / or beanes / or pese, what punyshment is he wor thy whyche refuseth to tylle that groũd which tylled beareth men: And in tyllage of the erthe is requyred a longe and paynefull labour, here the short tyllage is also entysed with a pleasure / as it wer a reward prepared therfore.

Epilogue Wherfore if the sense of nature, if honestye / if naturall affectyon / if deuotion / if gentelnes / if vertue any thynge moue you, why abhorre ye from that whych god ordeyneth, nature enacteth, reason entyseth / the scryptures bothe of god and man prayse / the lawes com-

commaūde, the whole cōsent of al natyons appꝛoue / to whyche the enſample of euery good man pꝛo uoketh: That if the moſt parte of thynges (yea whyche be alſo bytter) ar of a good mā to be deſyꝛed foꝛ none other purpoſe, but by cauſe they be honeſte, matrimony doutles is chefely to be deſyꝛed wherof a man may dout whether it hath moꝛe honeſty thā pleaſure Foꝛ what thynge is ſweter, then with her to lyue, with whome ye may be moſt ſtreyghtly copuled. nat onely in ꝑ beneuolence of the mynd, but alſo in the cōiunction of ꝑ body. yf a greate delectation of mynde be taken of the beneuolence of our other kynſmen, ſythe it is an eſpecyall ſwetnes to haue one with whom ye may communycate the ſecrete affectyons of

your

your mynde, with whom ye may speake euen as it were with your owne selfe, whom ye may sauely truste, whyche supposethe your chaunces to be his, what felycyte (thynke ye) haue the coniunction of man and wyfe, than whych no thynge in the vnyuersall worlde may be founde outher greater or fermer: For with our other frendes we be conioyned onely with the beneuolence of myndes, with our wyf we be copuled with most hyghe loue, with permyxtyon of bodyes, with the confederate bād of the sacramēt, and fynally with the felawesshyp of all chaunces. Furthermore in other frēdshyps, howe greate symulation is ther: howe greate falsyte: yea they, whome we iudge ouer best frendes, lyke as the swalous flee

away

awaye, when somer is gone, so they forsake vs, when fortune turneth her whele. And somtyme the freschest frende caste out the olde. We here of fewe, whose fydelyte endure tyll theyr lyues end. The wyues loue is with no falsite corrupted, with no symulation obscured, with no chaunce of thynges mynyshed, synally with deth only (nay nat with deth neyther) with drawen. She, the loue of her parentes / she, the loue of her systers / she, the loue of her brethern despyseth for the loue of you, her onely respecte is to you, of you she hangeth / with you she coueteth to dye. Haue ye ryches? ther is one ỳ shall saue it / ther is one ỳ shall encrease it. Haue ye none? ther is one that may seke it yf ye haue wealth / your felycyte is dou-

is doubled/if aduersyte, ther shal be one whych may conforte you, whych may syt by your syde, whiche may serue you/which may co uet your greffe to be hers. Do ye iudge any pleasure to be cõpared with this so great a conjunctiõ? Yf ye tary at home ther is at hand whyche shall dryue away ỹ tedyousnes of solytary beyng. yf frõ home/ye haue one that shall kysse you whẽ ye departe/long for you whẽ ye be absent, receyue you ioyously whẽ ye returne. A swete cõpaygnyon of youth/a kynd solas of age. By nature yea any felawshyp is delectable to mã, as whõ nature hath created to beneuolẽce and frendshyp. Thys felawshyp then howe shall it nat be moste swete, in whyche euery thynge is comune to them bothe? And con-

trarily, if we se the sauage beestes
also abhorre solytarye lyuynge &
delyted in felawshyp, in my mynd
he is nat onys to be supposed a
man, whych abhorreth frō this fe
lawshyp most honest & plesaūt of
all. For what is more hatefull thē
ỹ man which (as though he were
borne onely to hymself) lyueth for
hymselfe, seketh for hym selfe, spa
reth for hymself, doth cost to hym
selfe, loueth no persone, is loued
of no persone? Shall nat suche
monstre be adiudged worthy to
be caste out of all mens compa-
nye into the mydde see with Ty-
mon the Athenyense, whyche be-
cause he fledde all mens com-
paygny, was called Misanthro-
pus that is to say hateman? Ney
ther dare I here propound vnto
you those plesures whyche (wher
as

as they be naturaliy moste swete to man) yet (I can nat tell how (of the greate wyttes they be dyssembled, rather than despysed. Albeit, who can be borne with so rigorous a dyspostyon (I wyll nat saye dumppyshe and dastardly) whyche maye nat be taken with suche kynde of pleasurs, namely if he maye attayne them without the offense of god & mā / without the losse of his good name? Certes I wold cal hym no man but a playne stone. Albeit, that pleasure of bodyes is the leste parte of the goodes that wedlock hathe. But ymagyn that ye can contempne this, as vnworthy for a mā (howbe it without these we deserue nat onys the name of a man) let it be put (if ye wyll) amonge the moste base commodytes of wedlocke / nowe

nowe syr what can be more amia
ble then chaste loue / nay what
more holy & honest: There accrel
leth by the meanes a swete flocke
of alyelles/ther is dubled the nũ-
bre of parentes / of bretherne / of
systerne/of neuewes. For nature
can gyue one only mother / one
only father. By wedlocke, an
other father / an other mother is
goten, whiche (because they haue
cõmitted they? owne flesshe vnto
you) can nat but loue you moste
tenderly. Nowe syr, how hyghly
wyl ye esteame this thyng, when
your fayer wyfe shall make you a
father with a fayer chyld: When
sum litle yong babe shall play in
your halle whiche shall resemble
you & your wyfe: Which with a
mylde lyspyng, or amyable stam-
(merynge

shal cal you dade. Now adde, vn to your wyfes loue, ỹ bond more strong then any adamãte, which nat dethe hym selfe can braste a sundre.

Horace. Oh how blessed (sayth Flaccus) be they whom ye fast knot of wedlocke with tey whose stedfast loue by no pleit cã starte Tyll only dethe them tweyne do parte.

Ye haue them that may delyght your age/ ỹ may close your eyes/ ỹ may w thoffyce of the buryals/ in whõe ye may seme regenerate/ whome beynge a lyue, ye shalbe thought nat to haue dyed. Your gooddes which ye haue goten go nat to straũg heyres. Thus, whẽ ye ar passyng out of the worlde, haue fully executed all to gether, yet nat dethe hym selfe can seme sharpe nor bytter vnto you. Age must crepe vpon vs all / whether we

we wyll or nat. By thys polecye nature hath prouided that in our chylderne & neuewes we may be renewed & florysh fresh agayne. For who cā bere age heuyly whē in hys sonne he beholdethe his owne vysage that he hymselfe bare whā he was yong? Deth is ꝑpared for all. But by this only waye the prouydence of nature assayethe (as it were) a certayne immortalite, whyll she thus maketh one thynge to yssue out of an other (lyke as a yong plante whiche is cut of, from ẏ tree sprigeth freshly vp) nor he semethe nat to be vtterly quēched, which dyeth, leuynge issue behynd.

The refutation of the incōmodities of maryage.

BUt I know well ynoughe what among these, ye murmure against me. A blessed thing is wedlocke, if al proue acording

to the desire. But what if a wayward wyfe chaũceth: What if an vnchaste/ what if vnnatural chylderne: There wyll renne in your mynd the examples of those whom wedlocke haue brought to vtter destruction. Heape vp as muche as ye can, but yet these be ỹ vices of men & nat of wedlocke. Beleue me, an euyll wyfe is nat wont to chaunce, but to euyll husbondes. Put thys vnto it / that it lyeth in you to chuse out a good one. But what if after the mariages she be mard: Of an euyll husbande (I wyll well) a good wyfe may be mard. but of a good/ the euyll is wont to be reformed & mended. We blame wyues fallsly. No man (if ye gyue any credence to me) had euer a shrewe to his wyfe, but thrughe hys owne defaute. And

of good parētes comūly be borne lyke chylderne. Howbeit the chylderne also (howe so euer they be borne) communly do proue suche, as they be formed and fashoned in ther bryngyng vp. Nowe syr/ I see no cause why ye shuld feare ielowsye. Thys is the syknes of tolyshe louers. The chaste & lawfull loue knoweth no ielowsye. What do ẏ tragedes cum to your mynde? This aduouterous woman stroke in sūder her husbond with an axe. This poysoned him. That woman with her hatefull maners did dryue her husbond to deth. Why rather do nat Cornelia wyfe to Tiberius Graccus cum to your remembraunce? Why do nat Alcestis so good a wyfe of nat so good an husbond? Why do nat outher Julia wyfe of Pompei?

of Portia the wyfe of Cato renne in your mynd: Why do nat Artemisea worthy eternall memorie: Why do nat Hypsicratea wyfe to Mithridates kynge of Pontus: Why com nat into your mynde ỹ moſt gentle behauiour of Tertia Aemilia ỹ wyfe of Scipio Africanus: Why do nat ỹ faythfulnes of Turia: Why do nat Lucretia and Lentula cum in mynd: Why do nat Arria ſo hyghly commended of Plinie: Why do nat other innumerable, whoſe honeſt and chaſte lyuynge / and faythfulnes towarde theyr huſbandes coulde nat be altered nor corrupted nat by dethe: A rare byrd in erthe(ye ſay) is an honeſt woman. And ymagine ye agayne youre ſelfe worthy to haue a rare wyfe. A good woman(ſayth ỹ wyſe mã)

is a great felicite. Be bold to hope
oon woꝛthy foꝛ yoꝛ maners. And
very muche (as touchynge thys
mater) lyeth in the fashonynge of
her & in ỹ behauyng of your selfe
towardes her whome ye chose.
But sweter (ye wyll say) is liber-
te. Who so euer taketh a wyfe,
taketh a payꝛe of fetters whiche
nothyng saue only deth can shake
of. What can be swete to a man a
lone: If libertie be swete, it were
best (by myne aduyse) to take a
cõpaygnion with whom ye may
part this so plesaũt a thing. How
beit, what is moꝛe free than this
bondage, wher eyther is so bond
to other that neyther wolde be
enfraũchysed: Is nat euery man
bound to his frende: yet no man
complayneth that hys liberty is
take away. But ye feare leste if Oꝛbitas

bethe shuld take away your chyl-
derne ye shulde fall in to sorowe.
yf ye fere to be chylderneles, for
this very cause ye ought to mary
a wyfe whiche only may be the
cause that ye be nat chyldernles.
But what serche ye out so dily-
gently (nay so narouly and curi-
ously) al the incomodities of ma-
trimony, as who shulde say the
sengyll lyfe had no incommodie
at all? As who shulde saye, ther
were any lyfe of man that is nat
subiecte to al the chaunces of for-
tune. Ye must get hym out of the
world which wyl bere no incom-
modite. That if ye wyll haue re-
specte to the lyfe in heuen, thys
lyfe of man is to be sayd a dethe)
no lyfe. But if ye kepe your mind
within ỹ boũdes of mans estate,
nothyng is neyther sauffer, ney-

ther

ther quieter, neyther pleasanter, neyther amiablear, neyther happyer, than ỹ wedded lyfe. Marke the thyng by ỹ ende. Howe many se ye, whiche haue onys assayed wedlocke, that go nat gredely to it agayne. Dyd nat my frende Mauricius (whose excellent prudẽce is nat vnknowne vnto you) after the deth of hys wyfe whom he so singularly loued, marye the next monethe after a newe wyfe? Nat so greatly for thimpaciencie of hys luste, but he thought hys lyfe no lyfe without a wyfe, a swete companyon of al thynges. Dothe nat Iouius our frende nowe wooe his fourth wyfe? So he loued them when they lyued ỹ he semed comfortles. So, when one dyed he hated to be a wydower, as thoughe he fayntly had

loued them. But what reason we of honestie & pleasauntnes, when nat only profete entysethe but also necessite constrayneth to wedlocke: Take matrimony awaye, and within fewe yeres mankynd shalbe vtterly gone. Xerxes kyng of Persea when he beheld out of an hyghe tower the great multitude of men he could nat refrayne weappynge, bycause ꝑ of so many thousandes of men, within thre score yeres none shulde be lefte alyue. Why the thynge that he vnderstode of hys armye, do nat we cõsidre of al mankind: Wedlocke taken away, who one, of so many regions, prouinces, realmes, cities, townes, within an hũdreth yeres shalbe lefte alyue: Go we nowe and auaũce bachelarshyp, whiche bryngeth mankynd to de-

ſtruction. What peſtilence, what plage, can be ſent on man eyther frome heuen or frome helle more hurtful? What of any flode can be feared more daungerous? What can be loked for, more heuy and greuous, though ỹ fyer of Phaeton ſhulde cum agayne whan all the worlde was deſtroyed with fyar, And yet (for al that) in ſuche trobelous ſeſons many are wont to be lefte alyue, but by bachelarſhyp, ſuerly, nothing can be lefte. We ſe what a route of diſeaſes, how many caſualtyes, dayly and nyghtly lye in wayght vpon the fewenes of men. How many do the peſtylence take away? How many do ỹ ſee ſwalowe vp? How many do batell conſume. For I wyll nat ſpeke of theſe quotydiane dethes. Dethe flyeth about

euery

euery Where, he conneth, he ca-
ryeth, he hasteth to quenche man-
kynd, and do we yet auaunce ba-
chelarshyp & flee wedlocke? On-
les perchaunce the lyfe of the El-
sens and Dupolitans (whiche do
dampne wedlocke) do please vs,
whose pestilente sectes be multy-
plyed and encreased with vngra-
cious people neuer kaylyng. Do
we loke that god wyll geue vs ỹ
same vertue that he hath geuen
(as they saye) to the bees, so that
without the cõpaynie of woman
we myght be greate with chyld,
& gather with our mouthes sedes
of posterite out of the flowers?
Do wé requyre that lyke as the
poetes fayne ỹ Minerua yssued
out of Jupiters braynes, so in
lyke maner chyldrne shuld leape
out of our hedys? Or (to be short)

that

that accordyng to the olde fabuls, men shuld sprynge out of ỹ erthe, out of stones throwen forth, out of hard trunkes of trees. Out of the lappe of ỹ erth many thynges do sprynge without our laboure. Lytle plantes sprynge vp oftentymes vnder the shadwe of theyr mother. But vnto man nature hathe gyuen one only way of deryuyng yssue, whiche is, that by the mutuall labour of man and woman mankynd shulde be preserued, whiche if men wolde flee as ye do, truly these thynges which ye so hyghly auaũce shuld nat be. ye auaunce bachelarshyp, ye magnifie virginite. But neyther bachelars neyther virgyns shulde be if ye take away the vse of wedlocke. Why then is virginite preferred? Why is it in so

hyghe reputacion, if it be the destruction of man? It was commended/but for a time, and but in fewe, for it pleased god to shewe to men a certayne token, and as it were a representacion of the heuenly lyfe where they neyther
Mat. 22. marye nor be geuen in mariage. But for an example a fewe be sufficient, a multitude is nat profytable. For lyke as nat al groũdes
A symylytude. (be they neuer so ranke) be sowen to the sustenaũce of man/but part is let a lone/part dyght to ẏ pleasure and feedyng of the eyes. For the very copie and plentie of the thyng in so muche arable ground suffreth sum parte to be lefte barren and fruteles. But if none at al were sowen, who seeth nat but that we muste returne to ẏ frute of trees wherwith they lyued in
olde

olde tyme before the inuencion of tyllage. So bachelarshyp in so greate a multitude of men / in a fewe(I graunt)is commẽdable, in all, a thynge greatly to be dispraysed. But admyte ẏ in other men virginite had ẏ name of an hyghe vertue, yet in you suerly it shuld be vitious. For other men shal seme, to haue entẽded a purenes of lyuyng / ye shalbe iudged a trayterous murderoure of your lygnage, whiche, when ye myght haue maynteined by honest wedlocke, ye haue suffred to peryshe by foule bachelarshyp. Admyt it lawfull, out of a greate numbre of chylderne to offer one virgyne to god. The vplandyshe men whiche dwell in the coũtree offer to god the fyrst of theyr frute / nat theyr whole croppe. But ye, must

remembre

remembre that ye only be lefte the
laste / and the leuynges of your
stocke. And I pray you what di-
uersite is there whether ye slee or
refuse to saue hym which may by
you only be saued & easly saued:
A vio- But the example of your syster
lation prouoketh you to chastite. Nay,
for this very cause only, ye ought
moste chefely to eschue bachelar-
shyp. For now ye vnderstand that
the hope (which before was com-
mune to you bothe) of preseruing
your stocke is reuolued and caste
whole vpon your backe. Let vs
pardone the frayle kynde of the
woman / let vs pardon the vndel-
rrete age. The mayde ouercomen
with sorow did a mys. Thrughe
the entysmētes of folyshe women
and folyshe fryars she hathe caste
her selfe hedlong. ye beyng elder

muste

muste nedes remembre that ye be a man. She wold nedes dye with her auncestres, but your labour must be that they dye nat. Your syster hath withdrawen her selfe of her dutye, remembre now that ye ought to fulfyll the partes of two. The doughtars of Loth stycked nat to lye w̄ their father, iudgyng it better to mayntayne their lygnage by vnlawfull and abhominable inceste than to suffre it clene to fal awaye. And wyl nat ye then by matrimony which is, honest, holy, chaste, without offence, with hygh plesure mayntayne your stocke, which shal els be vtterly extyncte:

Wherfore let vs suffre them to folowe the lyfe of Hippolytus, let them (I say) embrace bachelarshyp, whiche eyther can be

The conclusion.

be husbandes but fathers can be none, or whose bare lyuynge is nat able to bryng vp chylderne/ or whose stocke may be maintey-ned by other, or suerly is suche, that better it were for the cõmune weale to be quenshed, than mayn teyned. But ye whã (wytnessyng the physitian a man neyther vn-lerned nor no lyar) ye seme by your nature very apte to engen-dre muche posterite, whẽ ye haue greate enheritaũce, commynge alsõ of a stocke, so good, so noble, that without greate synne and ỹ great hurte of the cõmune weale it can nat be quenched, further-more sythe your age is lusty and flowrysshynge, nor ye lacke nat the beautie of ỹ body, and when ther is offered you a wyfe, so lusty a mayde, so well borne as may be,

chaste

chaste, sobre, demure, godly, ha-
uyng an aungels face/with fayre
landes, when your frendes be-
seche you, your kynred weape,
your affinite cal on/your natyue
coũtree requireth/the very deade
corses of your auncestres rysyng
out of theyr graues obteste the
same of you, do ye yet tary, do ye
yet thynke vpon bachelarshyp?
Yf a thyng scase honest shulde be
required of you/yf an hard thing,
yet eyther the requestes of your
frendes, eyther the loue of your
stocke ought to ouercum your
mynd. Howe muche then, more
ryght and conuenient is it, that
the teares of your frendes/the
affection of your coũtree/the na-
turall loue of youre auncestres
ought to obteyne ẏ of you, wher-
unto goddes lawes and mannys
exhorte

The prayse of matrimony
exhorte / nature prycketh / reason
leadethe / honestie allurethe / so
many cõmodities puoke / necessi
te also cõstreyneth: But nowe we
haue brought forthe argumentes
abundantly ynoughe. I truste
longe a go (throughe myne ad-
uertysmẽt) ye haue chaunged
your purpose / and applyed
your mynd to holsom-
mer counselles.
Fare ye well.

TELOS.

Imprynted at London in
Flestrete at the sygne of the
George by me Robert
Redman.
CVM PRIVILEGIO
REGALI.

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